FEAR FACTOR: FOOD SAFETY AND VISUAL MEDIA IN POST-FUKUSHIMA JAPAN / REVISITING TENZO KYŌKUN

A Thesis

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by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis comprises two separate papers. The first study examines how the media in Japan functioned during the aftermath of the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, and the subsequent Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster. As residents in Japan sought credible information about food safety, their demands culminated in performative food safety demonstrations by politicians and other leaders.

The second paper examines the text *Tenzo Kyōkun,* completed by the Japanese Buddhist monk Dōgen in 1237. It explores Dōgen's possible motivations for writing it and its lasting legacy, especially regarding issues of sustainability in Japanese monasteries today.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Michael Matsuda studied at the University of California, San Diego, earning a B.A. in Literature/Writing in 1996. Prior to his graduate studies at Cornell University, he made a living as a teacher, chef, bartender, restaurant manager, farmworker, writer, editor, and caregiver to three mischievous little children. He completed his Master's degree in August, 2019.

To Veronica, Mom & Dad, Joaquin, Lucia, and Oscar

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the guidance and support of many people. I would like to sincerely thank my committee members, Jane Marie Law and Brett de Bary; the research assistance and hospitality of Masaki Matsubara, who is currently serving as Abbot of Butsumoji Temple, the Fusu and Tenzo of Heirinji Temple, Tonoya Osho at Unchō-an Temple in Engakuji, Junko Kurata, and Masayuki Kurata; the research assistance at Cornell of Daniel McKee; and the encouragement, love, and support of Veronica Martinez Matsuda, Gaynor Ellis, Sean Eversley Bradwell, Kim Scott, Vladimir Micic, Linda Penkower, Janice Kanemitsu, Shigeharu Shibazaki, Shannon Gleeson, Gabriel Carraher, Paco and Chata de la Cruz, and the Matsuda and Martinez families.

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PREFACE

This thesis contains two separate papers, each of which examines a particular aspect of modern Japanese foodways. My motivation for selecting this topic was personal, and mostly stems from my experiences living in Japan. I was always fascinated by the culture surrounding food there, and how it permeates, influences, and assigns meaning to everyday life.

Having lived most of my life in California, with an abundance of imported food available year-round, it was perplexing to see how seasonality was not only deferred to, but celebrated, and
there would be advertisements on TV, trains, and vending machines heralding each new season's foods and drinks. Late summer would turn to fall, and people around me would be excited about eating a fish called *sanma* (Pacific saury), or *matsutake* mushrooms.

There was a reverence for geography and localness, concepts that were just starting to permeate American mainstream foodways. Food production was something that was respected, with people spending their whole lives mastering techniques of making noodles or growing rice. There was a particular emphasis on commensality, and I would often hear mealtime phrases like *mottainai* (roughly translated as "waste not") and how even one grain of rice contains the spirits of seven gods.

Food culture seemed to resonate everywhere in Japan, and the more I explored it, the more I realized the scope of its influence on economics, politics, class, religion, and identity. It is rooted in centuries-old traditions, and yet it also occupies a prominent seat at the table of modern global foodways. How it influences food production, trade, and consumption habits around the world, and its implications on climate change, pollution, food insecurity, and other global issues are topics that I think warrant urgent attention.

Fear Factor: Food Safety and Visual Media in Post-Fukushima Japan

Introduction

On October 31, 2011, a little more than seven months after the onset of the destructive Great East Japan Disaster, a parliamentary secretary at the Cabinet office, named Yasuhiro Sonoda, stood in a room in Tokyo before an assembly of reporters and television cameras. With a trembling hand, he slowly poured water from a plastic container into a drinking glass and held it up for everybody in the room to see. Without saying a word, he proceeded to take a couple of gulps of the water, then paused and held the glass up again. Then, in a manner reminiscent of a sake-drinking dare in a Japanese pub, Sonoda downed the remaining liquid in a slightly exaggerated motion and showed the empty glass in triumph to the gaping crowd (Figure 1).

This spectacle, in fact, was indeed the result of a dare. Sonoda had, in previous press conferences, been making claims about the low levels of radiation in the remaining pools of water at the Fukushima nuclear power plant after the meltdown, which he stated would be safe to release back into the ocean. Two freelance journalists, one identified as Yu Terasawa, challenged the veracity of Sonoda's claims. If the water was indeed safe, the journalists said, then why don't you show us by drinking it? On this day, Sonoda accepted the challenge; the water he poured from the container was decontaminated and desalinated water that had supposedly been collected from the puddles beneath the buildings of Nuclear Reactors 5 and 6 of the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Plant. Accompanying photos in the day's news coverage

indeed showed a worker in a protective suit collecting water from the plant and pouring it into the plastic container Sonoda had used.

The stage for Sonoda's act was a regularly occurring press conference organized by both the Japanese government and TEPCO (Tokyo Electric Power Company). Their message was clear: They were willing to do everything they could to emphasize the veracity of their claims about public safety. Whether Sonoda was convincing or not is arguable. What is clear, however, is that this attempt by the government to communicate to the people of Japan on a visual level is indicative of a decisive shift in the way it relates to the public, and this use of video and photography continues to be especially significant in the discourse surrounding issues of food and water safety in post-Fukushima Japan.

Precedent and Context

Sonoda's press conference was hardly the first time a public official in Japan had stood before the cameras and consumed something that was perceived to be possibly dangerous in order to prove a point. On March 24, just 13 days after the earthquake, Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara drank a glass of tap water to assure residents of Tokyo that the levels of iodine-131 were within the acceptable limits (Figure 2). On April 10, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yukio Edano ate a strawberry grown in the Fukushima region (Figure 3), and on April 12, at an outdoor farmer's market in Tokyo, he made a joint appearance with comedian Shizuyo Yamasaki and ate other produce from Fukushima, including a tomato (Figure 4).

In 1996, after an E. coli breakout that sickened more than 6,000 children and killed 10, Health and Welfare Minister Naoto Kan staged a public eating of daikon radish sprouts (Figure 5), at the angry insistence of the farmers themselves. (Kan would later become prime minister, and was in office at the time of the Fukushima disaster. One of the reporters who challenged Sonoda to drink the water cited the precedent of Kan's eating of the daikon radish sprouts 15 years earlier.) And in October, 2001, amid concerns of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (Mad Cow Disease) in the nation's beef supply, Health Minister Chikara Sakaguchi and Agriculture Minister Tsutomu Takebe stood in front of reporters and ate morsels of beef with chopsticks (Figure 6).

It is important to note, however, that Japan is not unique in this phenomenon of publicly staging food safety demonstrations. To cite just a few examples, in March, 1996, in Ipswich, England, British Agriculture Minister John Gummer sat in front of the cameras and fed his 4-year-old daughter a hamburger to emphasize how safe he believed British beef was amid the BSE scare (Figure 7). In January, 2004, after the outbreak of the deadly bird flu virus, Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra called a press conference and nibbled pieces of chicken (Figure 8). And in June, 2010, U.S. President Barack Obama visited New Orleans after the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico and posed for cameras eating shrimp (Figure 9). Six years later, in May, 2016, President Obama performed again, drinking a glass of filtered tap water in Flint, Michigan (Figure 10).[1]

[1] For further examples, see Figures 12-14.

In 2011, when radiation from the Fukushima nuclear plant meltdown leaked into the surrounding area, there had already been a sense of mistrust and anxiety within Japan about the safety of the food supply. People were suspicious of the government's competency and even its intentions. Their fears were reinforced by earlier events. In July, 2000, government officials acted slowly in notifying people of the discovery of bacteria in Snow Brand milk, and 14,000 people ended up falling ill. In 2001, the government bungled the discovery of BSE in a cow, first by taking too long to announce the findings, then by sheepishly admitting that they had accidentally ground up the infected cow carcass and sold it as bonemeal to be fed to other cows.[2] There were various other food scandals as well (Figure 11), some the result of negligence on the part of food companies, while others the result of intentional fraud involving mislabeling of food products, using fake ingredients, or re-using expired products. Major companies were often involved in these scandals, including Fujiya Co., Mister Donut, and Ishiya Trading Co.[3]

It was into this atmosphere of anxiety that the Fukushima nuclear meltdown occurred, releasing radiation into the soil, water, and food supply. Consumers, in search of clear information about what was safe to consume and what was contaminated, had to navigate through various competing agendas in the media. The government's message was that people should have faith in its monitoring system, which would protect consumers from cesium- and iodine-tainted products. However, the government's reliability was already suspect, and it was perceived as being not

[2] Larimer, "A Whole Lot at Steak"
[3] Tabuchi, "Scandals in Food Industry Shatter Safety Myth"

only too slow to react to developments at the nuclear power plant, but also guilty of prioritizing economic concerns over public safety. Anti-nuclear advocates, opposed to the development of both nuclear weapons and nuclear energy, were seen as being all too eager to sensationalize the damaging effects of the meltdown. Both in the Japanese and in the international press, frequent comparisons were made to Chernobyl, as an instructive example of the effects of radiation on people, and also because the mere mention of Chernobyl invoked a tragic, large-scale catastrophe.

Conversely, nuclear energy advocates, both within Japan and abroad, were seen as being complicit with the government in downplaying safety concerns and minimizing any perceived threat of radiation. When it came to produce from Fukushima that had been exposed to radiation, regional farmers, at risk of losing their livelihood, were pushing to continue selling their produce as safe for consumption. Meanwhile, some reporters—mostly freelance journalists—along with consumer advocate associations, were pressing for more government transparency and accountability.

The inadequacy of the media to convey vital information about public safety is summed up in the words of a resident of Motoyoshi, a town in nearby Miyagi Prefecture, who continued living there even after the disaster. “The fears are real. The worry people have in their stomach, and the fear about whether you’re safe or not, or whether decisions you’re making for your family are the right ones? *Those are real!* … And until someone gives us *believable* data, and a ground you can stand on to make

a real decision, people are going to have this stress in the pit of their stomach. Forever."[4]

In the end, Japanese consumers within reach of the Fukushima radiation fallout had three choices: They could eat the food, having faith that government agencies were protecting them; they could abstain from eating anything from Eastern Japan, if they were financially able to afford this option; or they could take the oversight of safety into their own hands, testing their food before they ate it. Many people did opt for testing their own food, and at some farmers' markets, like the Nippori Marché held at Nippori Station in Tokyo, a machine was set up so people could check their food or soil for the presence of Cesium 134 and 137 isotopes.

The Spectacle of Consumption

Before the government started to rely on food-safety performances to communicate with the public, Japanese audiences were already familiar with close-up images of people eating on TV. *Oogui* competitions, featuring contestants trying to out-eat each other, had been a feature of the cultural and media landscape ever since the show "TV Champion" debuted in 1992.[5] Additionally, as one media pundit observed in 1999, "So much air time and magazine space is dedicated to good food that the subject of 'cuisine' or 'cooking' transcends genre labels. Every variety show has a 'cooking corner' and every travel show is centered around a particular region's

[4] Katayama, "We are All Radioactive"
[5] *Japan Times,* "All You Can Eat and Then Some"

food."[6] Within this context of culinary entertainment, it is easy enough to see how a comedian could accompany a government official in eating "safe" food for the camera, even given the context of the aftermath of a disaster.

In fact, the Japanese obsession with food is strongly tied to notions of cultural identity, and what people eat, whether in their localized region, or in Japan as a whole, serves to reinforce their consciousness of status and place. One effect of the food-safety performance news conferences, though it may be an unintended consequence, is that they effectively reinforce the stability of class consciousness. "Consumers who are part of the same economic position construct their 'class consciousness' around consumption habits, which allows them to accumulate cultural capital and to engage in a symbolic competition."[7] After March, 2011, Japanese society was in disorder, and notions of social class were disoriented. By reassuring people that food consumption habits could continue without disruption, the government was seeking to restore a measure of stability back into the class system.

However, by participating in and broadcasting the food-safety performance spectacle as a news event, journalists evinced their tendency to frame news as entertainment. The ratings-based motivation of news organizations has been a target of criticism, and it has often resulted in too much focus on entertainment and not enough on critical reporting. In the end, this deprives a democratic society of the necessary function of scrutiny.

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[6] Brasor, "Iron Stomachs and Chefs Give it Their All"
[7] Rath and Assmann, *Japanese Foodways*, 2

Underlying Narrative

According to Judith Butler, when examining photographs, the conveyed perspective is a crucial point of analysis. Because food-safety performance video footage is mostly shot with a stationary camera, Butler's argument can be applied to video here as well. For the most part, these videos are shot by zooming in on the politician's face as he eats. This not only serves to emphasize the visual proof being displayed (that of the politician actually consuming the object), but also by omitting the crowd of reporters and other officials in the room, it serves to de-emphasize the notion that the scene is a staged event. In fact, the camera is usually eye-level, or a little higher, as if to give the impression that you, the viewer, are sitting at the dinner table with the politician or standing nearby while he eats.

The tendency, then, is for the media to be complicit with the government in communicating its message. Occasionally, the media can be critical, although that is more often the case with international news agencies. One telling sign, in a print or online article, is the facial expression of the politician in the photograph. Although they generally try to look as though they are enjoying the act of consumption, they very often display flashes of a grimace or an unenthusiastic look, and a critical newspaper usually manages to capture that negativity in the photograph.

Butler also cites Susan Sontag's assertion that photographs lack narrative continuity.[8] In other words, in order to be effective, visual media needs to be supported by a narrative. That is certainly the case here. The press conferences tend to

[8] Butler, 823

be presented as very official proceedings, with politicians handling themselves in a solemn and concerned manner. The operative narrative is that the government recognizes the potential dangers to the food supply, but it is here to assure you, the public, that you will be safe, not just this time, but every time. The scene of the politician at the microphone, surrounded by reporters hanging on his every word, carries the implication that what the politician is saying is gravely important and unquestionably true. The narrative asserts that whatever statement made about the safety of the food is backed up by exhaustive research and analysis by the most reliable scientists in the country. When the politician eats, he evokes images of a maternal animal teaching its young how to eat. The government will protect and nourish its citizenry: The underlying narrative is meant as the ultimate reassurance.

At the same time, the very act of having to present such a visual performance signals something totally different. It is recognition of the fact that if citizens cannot actually witness a government official consuming the food in question, they will not truly believe it is safe. In other words, it is a tacit acknowledgement not only of the deepened fears of the citizenry, but also of the complete subversion of the ideology of a protective, beneficent government that has the best interest of its citizens in mind. These staged performances are not just a sign of desperation, but a watershed moment in governmental communication, one made possible by the convergence of the facilitated flow of photos and videos via the Internet, and a breakdown in trust of the government.

In the future, if not now, these food-safety performances may become a requirement in all governmental declarations of food safety. By 2011, the precedent

had seemingly been set. In the immediate aftermath of the nuclear meltdown, journalist Shuntaro Torigoe demanded that Prime Minister Naoto Kan eat spinach on TV, recalling that he had eaten the daikon radish sprouts in 1996.[9] As mentioned earlier, one of the reporters that challenged Sonoda made reference to Kan eating the daikon radish sprouts as well. The other reporter, who challenged him on another day, asked him, "Because we are prohibited from entering the Fukushima No. 1 Nuclear grounds, we have to trust the information provided by TEPCO. If the water is really safe enough to drink, can you provide the water in glasses and have everyone drink it?"[10]

The Role of Visual Media

The role of video and photography in food-safety performance press conferences is a vital one. Because visual proof is demanded, just words or sounds are insufficient. Even if a government official releases a statement declaring the food or water to be safe, or makes the same announcement on the radio, few people would believe him unless they are able to see him consume it. After drinking the water, Sonoda, perhaps aware of the danger of this reality, attempted to redefine the dynamics of the situation and rescind the message he had just conveyed. "Just drinking (the water) doesn't mean safety has been confirmed, I know that. Presenting data to the public is the best way."[11]

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[9] Brasor, "Japanese Officials Dress the Part But Fail to Address the Issues"
[10] *The Asahi Shimbun*, "Parliamentary Secretary Drinks Water From Fukushima Plant"
[11] Demetriou, *The Telegraph*

The importance of having a visual connection with food is apparent in other spheres as well. As Stephanie Assmann writes, due to growing concerns about food safety and food imports, the number of Japanese consumers embracing the "Eat local" and Slow Food movement is growing.[12] A result of this is that people are demanding more disclosure of information about the source of their food. One concept being put forth by the government, along with some other organizations, is that of "traceability," or the ability to see where food comes from, including stages of production, processing and distribution.[13]

The need for this traceability is articulated by the organization Food Action Nippon, whose motto is *Kao ga mieru seisansha*, literally translated as "a producer whose face is visible," though its connotation is "a producer whose products are visible, reliable and of high quality – in short, a producer that consumers can trust and relate to."[14] This concept was even co-opted by the fast-food chain Mos Burger in 2008. On its website it advertised *Seisansha no kao ga mieru yasai*, or "vegetables whose producer's face is visible."[15]

This visual connection to food that video and photography allows for has a much more emotional impact than the effect generated by other media. Michael Fisch describes this as the effective immediacy of digital media, made possible because "the logic of immediacy dictates that the medium itself should disappear and leave us in the

[12] Assmann, "Reinventing Culinary Heritage," 243-245
[13] Hall, "Food With a Visible Face"
[14] Assmann, "Food Action Nippon and Slow Food Japan," 4
[15] Assmann, "Reinventing Culinary Heritage," 252

presence of the thing represented."[16] This elimination of interval strives to be more evocative of "reality," and thus closer to truth.

Another possible reason that visual media has superior potency over words, especially when discussing food safety, could be the seemingly shameless abuse that language has taken vis-à-vis reality. For many years, officials in Japan have relied on euphemisms to make unpleasant truths more palatable, or even to deny their reality. During World War II, for example, government-sanctioned sex slaves were called "comfort women" and the research unit that conducted cruel biological experiments on live human beings was given the name "Epidemic Prevention and Water Purification Department." These are but two of many examples. Given this historical context, how can people be expected to rely on the government for accurate information in times of crisis, especially when it can have life-threatening consequences? From this perspective, it is not difficult to see how the public might demand visual proof.

Christine Marran makes another salient point about the need for visual media when discussing food safety. Because radiation is invisible, it is difficult to represent the dangers it poses.[17] Photographs and video would barely do better than words in this regard. Conversely, representing the "safety" of food exposed to radiation is equally as difficult. However, by documenting somebody consuming the food, this challenge is seemingly met.

Communicating to the public about the dangers of radiation is also made difficult by the need to use unfamiliar technical terms and concepts. Not only do

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[16] Fisch, 139
[17] Marran, 4

people have to learn what millisieverts, cesium, and strontium are, they also have to know how soil, air, food and water is affected and how radiation travels up the food chain. Because nuclear meltdowns are relatively few, and the circumstances around them vary each time, there ends up being a gap in communication and knowledge. Given this difficulty, it's clear to see how the easily comprehensible food-safety performances emerged in popularity, becoming an effective and potent form of communication.

A final reason that visual media became important in the aftermath of the Fukushima disaster is that in the digital media age, it has become both easy and common for ordinary citizens to shoot their own videos and share them with others on a large scale. One example of this is the video uploaded to Youtube by the mayor of Minami Soma, a city 16 miles from the Fukushima nuclear power plants. He undermined official government channels by appealing directly to people all over the world for help.[18] Twenty years ago, a documentary filmmaker might shoot a film, but even after securing funding, shooting the footage and editing it, it would be hard to reach wide audiences. The ordinary citizen-filmmaker faced a lot of obstacles to have any impact. Nowadays, this can be achieved almost instantaneously; the interval is being closed. And as a result, the government is put in competition with public-sourced visual media. In order for the government to continue to control the message, it has turned to these press conferences, where it can limit what is being shown and direct what is being said, thus influencing the direction of public discourse.

[18] Sakurai, "SOS from Mayor of Minami Soma City"

Of course, food-safety performances are not ideal, and visual media has its limitations. In many cases, politicians faced public backlash and were mocked for a perceived hackneyed attempt to appear truthful. When Takabe and Sakaguchi ate the beef, the secretary-general of the Consumers Union of Japan, Hiroko Mizuhara, noted, "This kind of performance is laughable. They are mocking consumers."[19] As for Gummer, the British politician who fed his daughter a hamburger on camera, "the burger episode turned him into a figure of fun and led to a lasting public mistrust of government pronouncement on food scares."[20]

Another pitfall is oversaturation, reducing the impact of these press events. Or, if people fall ill because of radiated food, the public will recall these videos as being misleading, thus forestalling their effectiveness for the future. So far, however, the performances have been validated by events. Effects of BSE have been minimal, the daikon radish sprouts scandal died down, and as of yet, the deleterious effects of eating radiated food from the Fukushima region have not surfaced. Of course, as was the case in Chernobyl, multiple cases of cancer and other harmful effects of radiation did not manifest themselves right away, but years after the disaster. Whether Japan faces future issues from Fukushima radiation will be evident in the years to come.

[19] "Japanese Lawmakers Defy Mad Cow Concerns, Eat Beef," *The China Post*
[20] "John Gummer: Beef Eater," *BBC News World Edition*

Gallery of Photographs

Figure 1: Japanese MP and parliamentary spokesman for the cabinet office Yasuhiro Sonoda drinking water in Tokyo, October 31, 2011. Source: Asahi Shimbun, 1 November 2011

Figure 2: Tokyo Governor Shintaro Ishihara drinking water in Tokyo, March 24, 2011. Source: www.cnngo.com. 25 April 2011.

Figure 3: Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yukio Edano eating strawberries in Tokyo, April 10, 2011. Source: Washington Post, 15 April 2011

Figure 4: Japanese Comedian Shizuyo Yamasaki and Chief Cabinet Secretary Yukio Edano eating tomatoes in Tokyo, April 12, 2011. Source: Washington Post, 15 April 2011

Figure 5: Japanese Health Minister Naoto Kan eating radish sprouts in Tokyo, 15 August 1996. Source: http://www.yomiuri.co.jp/politics/kan/garticle.htm?ge=782&gr=2783&id=72757

Figure 6: Japanese Health Minister Chikara Sakaguchi and Agriculture Minister Tsutomu Takebe eating beef in Tokyo, 2 October 2001. Source: http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,178476,00.html

Figure 7: U.K. Agriculture Minister John Gummer and his 4-year-old daughter, Cordelia eating hamburgers in Ipswich, England, March 20, 1996. Source: Washington Post, 15 April 2011

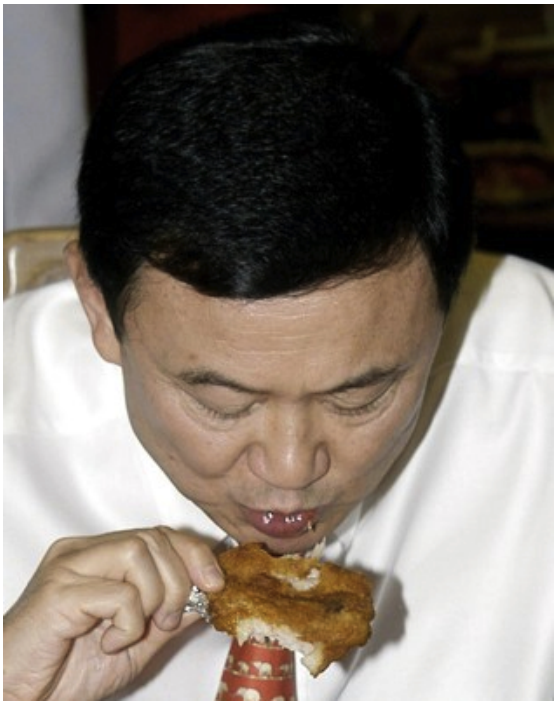

Figure 8: Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra eating chicken in Thailand, January 20, 2004. Source: Washington Post, 15 April 2011

Figure 9: U.S. President Barack Obama eating shrimp in New Orleans, June 4, 2010. Source: Washington Post, 15 April 2011

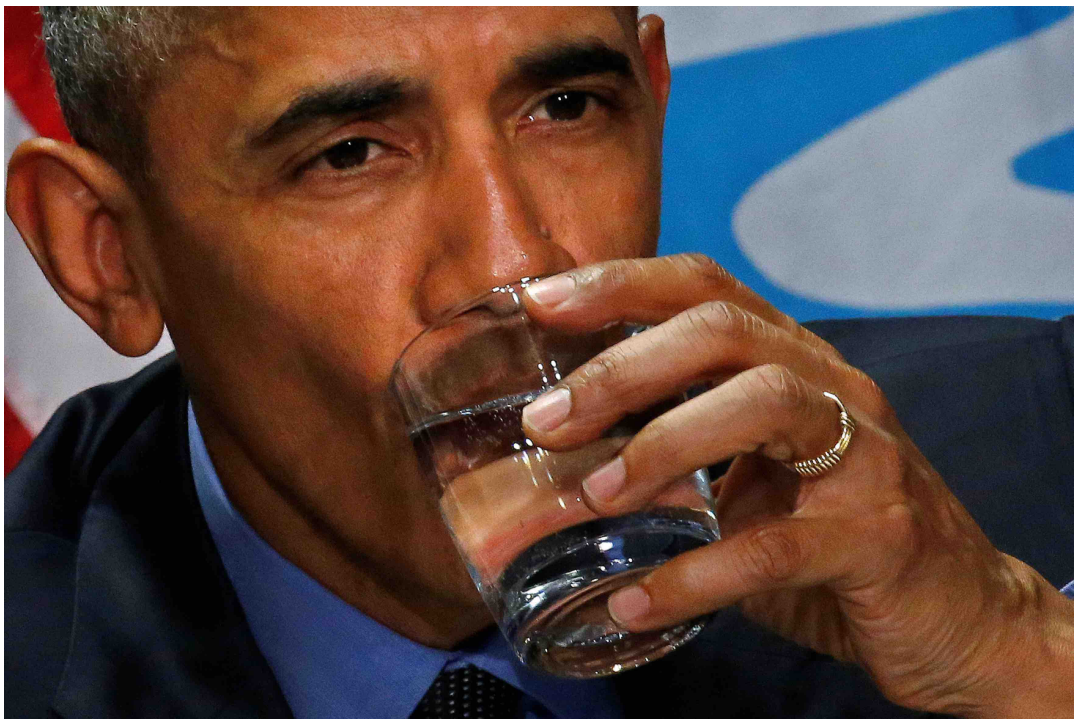

Figure 10: U.S. President Barack Obama drinking filtered tap water in Flint, Michigan, May 4, 2016. Source: http://time.com/4318358/obama-drinks-flint-tap-water

Figure 11: A mapping or recent food scandals in Japan. Source: http://www.japanprobe.com/2007/11/01/food-scandal-map-of-japan/

Figure 12: Objecting to a proposal for a fracking wastewater storage well, a citizen asks commissioners at a Nebraska Oil and Gas Conservation Committee meeting if they would be willing to drink fracking wastewater. March 24, 2015. Source: https://www.bbc.com/news/av/magazine-32121390/nebraska-fracking-stunt-goes-viral

Figure 13: In an interview on French television station Canal Plus, a GMO advocate, after declaring that the herbicide Roundup is safe for human consumption, is challenged to drink a glass. (His response: "No. I'm not stupid.") Source: http://time.com/3761053/monsanto-weed-killer-drink-patrick-moore/

Figure 14: In perhaps one of the earliest examples, an episode of the TV show "The Simpsons" that aired November 1, 1990. Mr. Burns is running for governor so he can change the laws regulating pollution from the nuclear power plant he owns. He stages a photo opportunity eating dinner with a blue-collar family. With the TV cameras rolling, Marge sabotages him by serving him a three-eyed fish that was found in the river near the power plant. He tries to take one bite but spits it out, and the journalists declare his campaign is ruined. Source: https://tv.avclub.com/the-simpsons-classic-two-cars-in-every-garage-and-t-1798166093

Revisiting *Tenzo Kyōkun*

Introduction

> I approached and asked his age. He replied that he was 68 years old.
> Then I went on to ask him why he never used any assistants.
> He answered, "Other people are not me."
> "You are right," I said; "I can see that your work is the activity of the *buddhadharma*, but why are you working so hard in this scorching sun?"
> He replied, "If I do not do it now, when else can I do it."
> There was nothing else for me to say.[21]
>
> -Dōgen, in *Tenzo Kyōkun*

In the spring of 1237, the Japanese monk Dōgen completed writing the text *Tenzo Kyōkun*, loosely translated as "Instructions for the Monastery Cook," which he had started writing three years earlier. Dōgen was a prolific writer and a major figure in Japanese Buddhist history. This one small text, however, is considered by many to be his most significant. In fact, Kōshō Uchiyama, who will be discussed later, calls it "one of the most valuable religious texts of all time."[1] What were Dōgen's motivations for writing it, and is it still relevant today?

Who was Dōgen?

Among the various anecdotes that delineate Dōgen's biography, the story that immediately comes to mind for most people is the one of Dōgen meeting the Chinese tenzo (monastery cook). As Dōgen recounts, he had arrived in China to study, and at this point he was still staying on the ship. A monk, who looked to be about 60 years

[21] Uchiyama, 9-10

old, came on board to buy Japanese mushrooms. Dōgen talked to him and found out that he was a tenzo who, lacking mushrooms to make a special meal for a festive occasion, had walked about 12 miles to get there. Dōgen invited him to stay and have a meal so they could talk, but the man insisted that he needed to head back on his return journey so he could prepare for the next day's meal. The following is Dōgen's account of the rest of the conversation:

> "Is there not someone else in the monastery who understands cooking? Even if one tenzo is missing, will something be lacking?"
>
> "I have taken this position in my old age. This is the fulfillment of many years of practice. How can I delegate my responsibility to others? Besides, I did not ask for permission to stay out."
>
> I again asked the tenzo, "Honorable Tenzo, why don't you concentrate on zazen practice and on the study of the ancient masters' words rather than troubling yourself by holding the position of tenzo and just working? Is there anything good about it?"
>
> The tenzo laughed a lot and replied, "Good man from a foreign country, you do not yet understand practice or know the meaning of the words of ancient masters."
>
> Hearing him respond this way, I suddenly felt ashamed and surprised, so I asked him, "What are words? What is practice?"
>
> The tenzo said, "If you penetrate this question, how can you fail to become a person of understanding?"
>
> But I did not understand. Then the tenzo said, "If you do not understand this, please come and see me at Mt. Ayuwang some time. We will discuss the meaning of words." He spoke in this way, and then he stood up and said, "The sun will soon be down. I must hurry." And he left.[22]

This story appears in *Tenzo Kyōkun*, and as I will discuss later, this text plays an important role in the crafting of Dōgen's legacy, by later scholars and by himself.

Dōgen was born in Kyoto in 1200, the son of "a beautiful, yet ill-fated woman" and an elder man with noble lineage.[23] Because it was his mother's second marriage,

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[22] Tanahashi, 59-60

[23] According to Alicia and Daigan Matsunaga in *Foundations of Japanese Buddhism*, "A number of modern historians believe that [Dōgen's mother] is the woman described in the *Heike Monogatari*, to whom Yoshinaka turned when he realized he was about to face defeat, and in her embrace managed to forget the battle."

his familial circumstances were considered disgraceful. His father passed away when he was two, and his mother died when he was seven. It is said that the profound grief of his mother's death was the event that taught him "the impermanence of all things."[24] Dōgen was never considered a legitimate member of his family, and in fact, he was raised by his older half-brother until the age of 12 or 13, when he fled home to receive ordination. Before her death, his mother is said to have implored him "to seek the truth of Buddhism by becoming a monk and to relieve the tragic sufferings of humanity."[25] As Alicia and Daigan Matsunaga write, "In view of her unhappiness, it would seem quite understandable if she imbued her young son with a strong sense of morality and dislike of worldliness."[26]

Dōgen was ordained on Mt. Hiei, which because of the efforts of Saichō in the 9th century, was the predominant place to study Buddhism in Japan at that time. Dōgen "delved deeply into systematic study of Buddhist sutras."[27] However, he soon became disenchanted with the petty affairs, like fighting over ownership of temples, and the general disregard of theology. As one legend recounts, Dōgen was dissatisfied as he wondered "why the patriarchs of the past had endeavored so seriously," and so he decided to go elsewhere.[28] After briefly staying at Onjo-ji (also called "Miidera," located in present-day Shiga Prefecture) and studying Pure Land teachings, Dōgen ended up at a temple in Kyoto called Kenniji, which was founded by Eisai in 1202.

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[24] Kim, 21
[25] Op. cit.
[26] Matsunaga, 234
[27] Kim, 23
[28] Op. cit.

Eisai, 59 years Dōgen's senior, and founder of the Rinzai Zen school, is credited with being the first to introduce Zen Buddhism to Japan. It is not known for sure if Dōgen actually studied under Eisai, but he was taught by a disciple of Eisai named Myōzen, whom he would later accompany to China. At Kenniji, Dōgen was introduced to "ethical precepts, the Tendai meditation methods known as "stopping and seeing" (*shikan*), and esoteric rites, in the manner of Eisai's syncretic school."[29]

In 1223, Dōgen left for China where, during his initial stay on the ship at shore, he had the previously mentioned encounter with the tenzo. This was said to be his first experience with idealistic and practical zen. Dōgen stayed in China for four years, during which time he would meet with the old tenzo again, who eventually helped him understand "the simplicity of truth, or the fact that actual daily life constituted true religious life."[30] Dōgen is said to have attained Enlightenment in 1224, and when he returned to Japan in 1227, he wrote extensively about practice and enlightenment, trying to introduce to Japan what he viewed as "the original, primary teachings of Buddhism as handed on by generations of masters in India and China."[31] Historically, he is credited as the founder of the Sōtō Zen school, which today is the largest school of Zen Buddhism in Japan (Rinzai and Ōbaku are the other major schools.) When he completed Tenzo Kyōkun in 1237, at the age of 37, "the direction of his life was still uncertain, at least in terms of the location and clientele of his teaching."[32]

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[29] Cleary, 2
[30] Matsunaga, 237
[31] Warner, 13
[32] Ibid., 14

A Brief Textual History of *Tenzo Kyōkun*

Tenzo Kyōkun is, on the surface, a set of rules and instructions set forth for the head cook of a monastery, who was one of the six *chiji* (the six administrative officers responsible for the economic affairs of the Zen monastery). It discusses such topics as how to plan and prepare a meal, the virtue of thriftiness, and the importance of cooking with love. Embedded within the rules and regulations, however, are principles for spiritual training that are based on Dōgen's version of Zen Buddhism. As Kōshō Uchiyama writes, "It deals not only with the handling of food, but also with our attitude toward all matters and people we encounter in our day-to-day lives."[1]

Dōgen had set about writing *Tenzo Kyōkun* while at Koshoji, just outside of Kyoto, in 1234.[33] Although he sometimes wrote in Japanese, which was considered more informal and vernacular, he wrote this text in the more formal Sino-Japanese (*kanbun*). The original manuscript does not appear to exist anymore, but there is a copy of it kept at Eiheiji, a temple in present-day Fukui Prefecture, dated March 26, 1502. At that time, it existed as part of a set of monastic rules, compiled by Kōshū with another text called *Chiji Shingi*.[34]

In 1667, Kōshō Chidō printed a new copy of *Tenzo Kyōkun* with woodblock, based off of the 1502 version.[35] It was made the first chapter in a book called *Eihei*

[33] Tanahashi, 244
[34] Heine, 68-69
[35] Ibid., 69

Shingi, a set of rules that Dōgen had compiled for the monks living at Eiheiji.[36] The other five chapters, covering such topics as rules for the study hall and instructions for seniority, had been written after *Tenzo Kyōkun*, and completed by 1249. This publication was over 400 years after Dōgen had written the texts, and there is no evidence that Dōgen had ever intended for them to be compiled as such. In fact, the publication of *Eihei Shingi* appears to have been "produced as a Soto response to the popularity of the *Obaku Shingi* text of the newly formed Obaku school supported by the shogun Tokugawa Ietsuna in 1660, which carried the imprimatur of authentic mainland discipline."[37]

In 1794, *Tenzo Kyōkun* was re-carved and printed again, in another edition of *Eihei Shingi*, by the 50th abbot of Eiheiji.[38] This version, which was annotated and footnoted, is considered the *rufubon* (popular) edition, and is the basis of the modern translations in existence today. It has since been translated into multiple languages, including Spanish, French and Catalan. And various English-language publishers have produced new translations and commentaries on it, among them Weatherhill in 1983, North Point Press in 1985, the North American Institute of Zen and Buddhist Studies in 1993, and SUNY Press in 1996.[39]

The Historical Literary Context of *Tenzo Kyōkun*

[36] Matsunaga, 240
[37] Heine, 69
[38] Baroni, 344
[39] For a more extensive listing of English translations, see Bibliography.

Up until Dōgen wrote *Tenzo Kyōkun*, the subject of food and how to think about it in practical terms had never been addressed seriously in Japanese Buddhism, and certainly not in that much detail. Even books about food for the general population, such as cookbooks and travel guides, did not exist in Japan until hundreds of years later in the Edo Period.[40] There were historical antecedents, however.

The basis for codifying monastic mealtime practices can be traced back to India, before Buddhism had spread to East Asia. At that time, monastic regulations forbade—except on certain occasions—monks from eating anything that they did not receive from begging. This custom of religious begging, in fact, had already existed before the advent of Buddhism. And since the monks almost always received prepared food that was ready to be eaten, no tenzo was needed at the monastery, although there did exist certain food-related positions, such as "monks who distributed offered food, those who took care of drawing lots [when there was not sufficient food for everybody], and those who handled different types of food."[41]

There were numerous exceptions to this rule, however, because many foodstuffs, such as rice, gruel, fish and meat, were considered a medicinal necessity.[42] Food was not classified as something to derive pleasure from; as far as monastic rules

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[40] Harada 1989, 104-42, in Rath, 130

[41] Warner, 107

[42] Evidence suggests that the taboo of consuming meat did not exist until the Northern and Southern Dynasties period of China (420-592). The primary reason was the recognition that all living things were intertwined, however other reasons given included the risk of accidentally eating meat with human flesh mixed in, the risk of having nightmares, the risk of being attacked by wild animals attracted to the aroma, etc. During this time, alcohol consumption and the use of pungent spices was also prohibited. (Warner, 109)

were concerned, it was strictly a source of nutrition that prevented sickness so that monks could continue their practice. One early Vinaya text explains:

> We do not eat for the sake of our self-satisfaction or to become arrogant. We eat neither to build a sturdy body nor to improve our appearance. We receive food offerings to maintain the body and to repel illness and hunger, to help us practice Buddha's way. Taking this alms food will banish old pains and prevent new pains from springing up. Thus we can sustain a peaceful life.[43]

There were important differences to note, however, between early Indian Buddhism, which put the focus on self-restraint and attaining Enlightenment, and the Mahayana Zen Buddhism of Dōgen's time, which believed in the inherence of "Buddha nature" in people. As Kōgen Mizuno points out in his essay "Eating Customs in the Early Sangha in India," "Where the Vinaya [of India] was a blueprint showing unenlightened monks how to develop into enlightened arhats or buddhas, Mahayana rules like the shingi were guidelines for buddhas to learn to express their nature clearly. The Vinaya was a system of external controls the individual was called on to accept, whereas Mahayana rules were based on the monk's or nun's autonomy and self-governance."[44]

Although the regulation of food practices can be traced back to India, it was the Chinese *Chan* (Zen) tradition that had the most discernible influence on Dōgen. Japanese Zen Buddhism was originally transmitted from China, and when Dōgen returned to Japan from his studies there, there was undoubtedly an expectation that he would return with a newer and purer understanding of Zen Buddhism. Through his

[43] Warner, 108
[44] Ibid., 114

teachings and writings, Dōgen assumed that role, portraying himself as an ambassador of authentic Zen practice.

Tenzo Kyōkun was informed not only by Dōgen's experience in China, but by Chinese texts that had already been written on the subject of monastic mealtime rules. As Hisao Shinohara writes in "Rules for Meals in China," Dōgen was "especially impressed with the monastic rules attributed to Baizhang (720-814), which he recommended to his students, saying, 'Students of Zen must obey the *Rules of Baizhang* diligently. Those rules govern the ceremonies of ordination, adherence to the precepts, zazen [sitting practice], and so forth.'"[45] In *Tenzo Kyōkun*, he instructs the reader to have a sincere and respectful mind, ending the section by asking, "How can the rules of reverend ancestor Baizhang be in vain?"[46]

Although it is not known if Dōgen actually read Baizhang's text, or if it even existed in print form at all, we do know that he had access to at least one text from China, the *Chanyuan Qinggui* (Rules of Purity for the Chan Monastery; compiled in 1103 and derived from Baizhang's teachings), which he mentions by name and quotes from in *Tenzo Kyōkun*. In addition, he may also have had access to the 1209 text *Ruzhong Riyong Qinggui* (Rules of Purity for Entering the Community and Daily Functions) while he was in China.[47] The influence of *Chanyuan Qinggui* seems

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[45] Dōgen, Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki, I-2, quoted in Warner, 116
[46] Tanahashi, 62
[47] As Shinohara points out, these Chinese Zen texts of monastic rules are based on "a long history of attention in China to cooking and eating," and he cites "the Confucian classics known as the Four Books and the Five Classics, which were written a thousand years or more before the Chan rules of purity." Confucius' rules for cooking and eating, which were often as precise and meticulous as Dōgen's, were not only concerned with practical matters like food safety and nutrition, but "solemnizing

particularly strong. As Shinohara writes, *Tenzo Kyōkun* "is virtually modeled on the much shorter section on the responsibilities of the cook in the Chinese text." One key difference, however, is that in *Chanyuan Qinggui*, the author Zongze "does not explicitly discuss the tenzo's attitude, which is so central to Dōgen's rule, and he only describes the gist of the tenzo's responsibilities, but he lays these out clearly in a way that points to the underlying ethos."

A Focus on Discipline

At this period in Japanese history, everyday cooking and eating were not considered much more than necessary tasks for survival. Food was not a subject that warranted intellectual inquiry. The question of why Dōgen chose to write about it is worthy of speculation.

One explanation could be that Dōgen was trying to bring a renewed focus to discipline, and food practices were just one aspect of that. At the time he was writing *Tenzo Kyōkun*, he had set up his own monastery at Koshoji in Fukakusa, where he had established a reputation as a strict teacher. As is evident in some of his other writing from the period, such as *Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki* (recording sayings, completed in 1238), Dōgen was particularly concerned with discipline in the form of monastic precepts. He was seeking to combine "self-generated internal spiritual prowess and external codes that guide the minute details of conduct from personal hygiene to

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eating with ritual" as well. In fact, there is a description of a food offering ritual, consisting of "a small amount of rice placed on the utensil to pay respect to the ancients who created food and cuisine," that is remarkably similar to a mealtime custom practiced in modern Japanese Zen monasteries.

interaction between junior and senior monks."[48] Shiohara describes *Tenzo Kyōkun* as a text that "shows [Dōgen's] frustration at not being able to find true practice in Japanese monasteries," and that "candidly describes his mental struggles and his earnest efforts to understand the monastic efforts he encountered [in China]."[49] Dōgen viewed his version of Buddhism as the final and correct form and criticized others as merely *upaya* (expedient means).[50] As he set up his own monastery in Fukakusa, he most likely felt that he was in a position to make an important intervention and finalize the monastic rules for all future generations.

Throughout *Tenzo Kyōkun*, Dōgen imparts discipline on two levels, interweaving theoretical guidance with straightforward explanations of rules. In one section, he writes rather obliquely, "When you prepare food, do not see with ordinary eyes and do not think with ordinary mind."[51] In contrast, later in the same section he meticulously and concisely instructs, "Put the food on trays, put on your kashāya, spread your bowing cloth, face the direction of the monks' hall, offer incense, and do nine full bows."[52]

It is important to note, however, that although monastic regulations can be explained as being vital to developing spiritual discipline, and they are necessary to ensure that all monks can practice with as few distractions as possible, Dōgen's

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[48] Heine, 141
[49] Warner, 122
[50] For example, he derisively referred to the *nembutsu* (ritual recitation) practice in Pure Land Buddhism as the "fruitless croaking of a frog day and night in the spring rice-field."
[51] Tanahashi, 56
[52] Ibid., 58

obsession with strict order and structure often seems to go beyond practical or doctrinal concerns. For example, in his writings, he sometimes describes being disgusted by not just spiritual transgressions, but other monks' lapses in hygiene as well. In *Shōbōgenzō Zuimonki*, "Dōgen is particularly keen on criticizing Chinese monks for growing long hair and fingernails or otherwise deviating from mainstream regulations and etiquette."[53] Later, he praises Japanese monks for "using a toothbrush, a device he says was unknown in China, where the 'stench was difficult to bear.'"[54] Finally, in another text, he makes specific mention of how he is repulsed by the dung scraper (the antecedent to toilet paper)[55].

These passages all serve to paint a picture of someone preoccupied, and often obsessed, with hygiene, order, and rules to maintain them. It seems evident that this compulsion was not something learned from his monastic experience in China, but rather something that was part of his character before his studies there. It is said that in China, he experienced the same frustration about superficiality that he had felt as a youth at Mt. Hiei. And just when he was about to return to Japan, he found out he had the opportunity to study under the famously strict disciplinarian abbot Ju-ching, and so he decided to stay. His desire for discipline that is evident throughout *Tenzo Kyōkun* could have been a major motivating force.

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[53] Heine, 141
[54] Ibid., 142
[55] Also the subject of a *kōan* by Chinese Zen master Yunmen Wenyan: "A monk asked Unmon, 'What is Buddha?' Unmon replied, 'A dried shit stick!'"

The Work of the Tenzo as *Shikan*

On a more doctrinal level, it is possible that in writing *Tenzo Kyōkun*, Dōgen was simply answering the question he himself posed to the old monk he encountered in China: "But why, when you are so old, do you do the hard work of a tenzo? … Is there something special to be gained from working particularly as a tenzo?" This is a view supported by Kōshō Uchiyama (1912-1998), who instructs, "When you sit in zazen, *just* sit, and when you work as a tenzo, *just* do that. … The idea of concentrating wholly on one thing (*shikan*) is the cornerstone of the teachings of Dōgen Zenji."[56]

Uchiyama was a Sōtō Zen priest who served as the abbot of Antaiji, a temple that was located in Kyoto and was dedicated to the scholarly study of Dōgen's writings. He was also a prolific writer who graduated from Waseda University, one of the top private universities in Japan, with a degree in Western Philosophy. In much of his work, he attempted to demystify Zen Buddhism for Western audiences, often making comparisons between Christianity and Buddhism.

On the subject of *Tenzo Kyōkun*, Uchiyama wrote a book called "How to Cook Your Life," published by the Sōtō-shū in 1956, then again in 1970. In it, he sought to interpret *Tenzo Kyōkun* for modern-day readers, specifically laypersons, and explore what relevancy it might still have. It is in this text where, as previously mentioned, he described *Tenzo Kyōkun* as "one of the most valuable religious texts of all time"

[56] Uchiyama, 24

because it instructs both monks and laypersons how to live every moment of their lives.

In the opening section of *Tenzo Kyōkun*, Dōgen writes about the six administrative positions that are traditionally held in a monastery: "The monks holding each office are all disciples of the Buddha and all carry out the activities of a Buddha through their respective offices." By introducing the text with this statement, Uchiyama writes, Dōgen establishes that "the tenzo practices the reality of life just as validly as those practicing zazen. In Zen, this is called practicing single-mindedly with all one's energies."[57]

Renpō Niwa, who served as abbot of Eiheiji, makes the point in "An Introductory Guide to *Instructions for the Cook*" that the fact that Dōgen deliberately wrote the rules for the tenzo separately from the rules for the other administrative offices emphasizes his view of its importance. He speculates, "My own guess as to why he took the position of tenzo so seriously is that Buddhist practice is very closely related to everyday life and among the three elements of daily life—clothing, food, and housing—food is the most important.[58]

Tenzo Kyōkun as Autobiography

To further speculate about Dōgen's motivation, it is also evident that he wrote *Tenzo Kyōkun* with the intention of shaping his own legacy, and in a sense, writing his own hagiography. In contrast to his other writings that are challenging in their

[57] Ibid., 30
[58] Warner, 42

theoretical and abstract concepts, *Tenzo Kyōkun* is much more accessible to readers. It is clear that his intended audience was not limited to his students at that particular time, but rather those who he imagined would be reading from a historical perspective. In fact, he even writes in the epilogue that *Tenzo Kyōkun* "was written for the students of later generations who will study the way, by Dōgen, dharma-transmitting monk, abbot of Kannondori Kosho Horin Zen Monastery."[59]

In another instance, in fact, Dōgen acknowledges his ambition for legacy by directly addressing these readers in the distant future. As he concludes his central argument about the preparation of food as it relates to practice, he writes, "Fellow monks of later generations, from this you should understand practice and from that you should understand words."[60]

Dōgen demonstrates an awareness of the changing nature of cultural traditions. Many of the rules he sets forth in *Tenzo Kyōkun* come from his reading of *Chanyuan Qinggui*, which had been compiled over 100 years earlier, and had already seemed incongruent to his time and place in Japan. In *Tenzo Kyōkun*, he concedes that it is not always possible to compare yourself with practitioners of the distant past. "It is difficult because the present times and olden times differ as greatly as the distance between heaven and earth; no one now can be compared with those of ancient times." "However," he continues, "if you practice thoroughly there will be a way to surpass them."[61] In making this acknowledgement, Dōgen is not only addressing practitioners

[59] Tanahashi, 66
[60] Tanahashi, 61
[61] Ibid., 56

of his time while establishing *Tenzo Kyōkun* as being rooted in tradition, he is also making a case for relevancy to practitioners many years into the future.

Having had an extensive education in classical literature and history as a child, Dōgen was presumably very conscious of his own place in history, as well as the efficacy of literature to help shape it. He came to recognize the authority of the written word while studying in China under Wu-chi Liao-p'ai. There, he became obsessed with the secret transmission records, and the notion of single transmission. As he later wrote in *Shōbōgenzō Shisho*, "Unless one is a Buddha, he cannot certify another Buddha, and unless one obtains the certification of a Buddha, he cannot be a Buddha."[62] This inclination was later evident in his teaching. While he rejected traditional paraphernalia like incense offering, sutra chanting, veneration of the Buddha, etc. as secondary practices, he acknowledged the usefulness of scriptures, which in his view, could be effective depending on the attitude of the mind. This was counter to the prevailing view that language was incapable of communicating such profound concepts as Enlightenment, which could only be transmitted intuitively.

The immodest narrative of *Tenzo Kyōkun* further supports the idea that it was intended as autobiography. The subtext is that Zen practice in Japan was not true, that Zen practice in China was pure, and that Dōgen was uniquely qualified to bring Japan, where monastic discipline was lax, corrupt and idle, up to the level of China. This narrative undoubtedly elevated his prestige in Japan and served to make him a valued teacher. Furthermore, when recounting his experiences in China, such as in the

[62] Matsunaga, 238

aforementioned encounter with the tenzo, Dōgen portrays himself as an inquisitive and resourceful student who is not only capable in Chinese, but also knows exactly what questions to ask. His perceptiveness and humility ultimately lead to the attainment of important teachings.

It is also noteworthy that Dōgen wrote *Tenzo Kyōkun* in Classical Chinese (*kanbun*), which was standard for official and scholarly works of the time, while most of his other work was written in Japanese (*kana-hogo*). This suggests that he not only intended *Tenzo Kyōkun* to be viewed as having higher intellectual status, but a higher historical place as well.

The Writing Style of *Tenzo Kyōkun*

On a structural level, *Tenzo Kyōkun* is the codification of rules set forth for the head cook of a monastery, interspersed with historical background and personal anecdotes. As mentioned previously, Dōgen quotes numerous passages from the *Ch'an-yuan ch'ing-kuei* of 1103, a code of regulations which in turn comments on what was believed to be the *'Code of Pai-chang'* but actually was a section on monastic rules in the *Transmission of the Lamp*, 1004. These facts suggest that Dōgen intended to carry on the tradition of Ch'an codes of regulation even while transforming their role from an auxiliary support system to a statement of the central practice of Buddhism.[63]

[63] Maraldo, 469-470

In much of his other writings, Dōgen challenges his readers with *kōan*, verbal shock techniques meant to invoke defamiliarization. His disciples already had extensive educations, and this was meant to break up "the nest of cliché" that causes and results from mental stagnation. This style of teaching, which was intended to provoke effort from the student, was known as *fuseppa*. Confucius was known to use it extensively; he would point out one corner of a matter, and if a student could not come back with the other three corners, he would not repeat himself.

In *Tenzo Kyōkun*, however, Dōgen's tone is much more straightforward and accessible. Martin Collcutt writes: "Dōgen always explains not only what should be done but how and why it should be done. He emphasizes a constant mindfulness that makes even the simplest of actions, whether washing the face, cleaning rice, or cutting vegetables, as conducive to Zen enlightenment as meditation, prayer, or sutra reading."[64] And Steven Heine adds: "*Tenzo Kyōkun* is the composition that makes most advantageous use of citations, interpretations, and allusions to kōans in support of the discipline of shingi by putting a special emphasis on the attitude or state of mind of the chief cook rather than on just his actions."[65] In fact, Dōgen includes a dialogue in which he "invented his own kōan case or at least reported new ones, a tendency that despite all his creativity is not repeated in writings from subsequent periods."[66]

Influence on Present-Day Temple Foodways

[64] Collcutt, as cited in Heine, 143
[65] Heine, 142
[66] Heine, 143

In order to learn more about the legacy of *Tenzo Kyōkun*, I spent two weeks in Japan in the spring of 2012 and visited two monasteries, Heirinji and Engakuji, and interviewed various officials there, including the tenzos. My aim was to find out how closely they regard the precepts of *Tenzo Kyōkun*. Do they still view the text as relevant? And to what extent are their practical and spiritual activities informed by it?

I was also curious about how these temples addressed environmental sustainability, an urgent international concern that did not exist in Dōgen's time. From the outside looking in, monastery foodways are a veritable model of sustainability, with very little having changed in over 800 years. They appear to exist on the periphery of the changing food culture, uninfluenced by changing notions of food, and unaffected by the "media-industrial-political complex." Monks tend to live healthy lives without food-related health problems; in the monasteries, very few natural resources go to waste; and through their activities, they have no discernible negative impact on the natural environment.

Heirinji

Heirinji is a Rinzai Zen temple in Saitama Prefecture, on the outskirts of Tokyo, originally established in 1375. It acts as a training temple, with 17 monks living there for training at the time of my visit. According to the *fusu*, the administrator who oversees financial and other affairs, the tenzo is not chosen based on skill, but rather by a mentorship system. And there are always two tenzos, with each performing the duty on alternate days.

There is little to no electricity in the kitchen. Cooking is mostly done in big iron pots called *kama*, over an open fire. Breakfast is always *okayu* (rice porridge), *umeboshi* (fermented plums), and *tsukemono* (pickled foods). There is more variation with lunch, the biggest meal of the day, which usually consists of rice, though sometimes udon, with one vegetable. This pattern is often referred to as *ichiju issai*, a humble meal of rice, pickles, soup, and one side dish. If there is dinner, which is often the case, it is leftovers from that day's lunch.

Danka, or temple patrons, donate a majority of the food that is consumed. In the garden, the monks are able to grow some food for themselves, like the plums for the umeboshi. Each day, the tenzo calculates how much food to prepare. Before that, he thinks about what he will cook and has the menu approved by the fusu. Unlike in *Tenzo Kyōkun*, the tenzo does not post the menu, and people only know what they will eat when it is being served.

The food they cook at Heirinji is basically vegan, with no meat, fish, or milk products. The tenzo tries to cook a variety of dishes to avoid monotony, and with the health of the monks in mind. And on particular occasions, he makes special meals. For example, when monks return from *takahatsu* (traveling and receiving donations in exchange for chanting sutras), he will make udon with *shojinage* (deep-fried vegetables). And at certain temple events, he will make *takekomi gohan* (rice cooked together with various ingredients).

These efforts are in line with the instructions Dōgen gives in *Tenzo Kyōkun*. He quotes *Chanyuan Qinggui*, "Put your awakened mind to work, making a constant effort to serve meals full of variety that are appropriate to the need and the occasion,

and that will enable everyone to practice with their bodies and minds with the least hindrance."[67] In the story of his encounter on the ship with the Chinese tenzo, in fact, the elderly tenzo had just walked 14 miles to buy mushrooms, and was preparing to walk 14 miles back, because the next day was a festival day and he wanted to make something special to offer the monks.

In terms of sustainability, the monks at Heirinji make a full effort to avoid waste. Any food they receive as a donation, they try their best to make it last as long as possible without it expiring. If it won't last another day, they try to finish it for that day's dinner. They also make a point of not using any pesticides in the temple garden.

Gratitude is another primary focus. They never refuse donated food, and never ask questions about its safety or origin, even after the nationwide worries about produce grown in the Fukushima region after the 2011 disaster. And when monks are served food, they never complain about what it is. Having worked in the temple garden, they can appreciate the hard work it requires to produce food. They also never complain about how the food tastes. In fact, they don't speak at all during mealtime. By not thinking about food in terms of likes and dislikes, they endeavor to overcome their dislikes.

Engakuji

Engakuji is a Rinzai Zen temple in Kamakura, about an hour south of Tokyo. Originally built in 1282, it had 20 monks in training at the time of my visit.

[67] Uchiyama, 3

According to the tenzo, the menu planning is very straightforward: Whatever is available is what you make. They receive most of their food as donations from *danka* as well. The produce is generally seasonal, like eggplant in the summertime and daikon in the winter.

Similar to the kitchen at Heirinji, cooking is done with a *kama* and fire. They recognize that cooking with gas or electricity would be easier, and many of the surrounding *shojin ryori* (traditional Buddhist cuisine) restaurants in Kamakura do so. But here they want to focus on appreciating the value of what they consume. Cutting firewood, splitting it, and drying it takes time and has to be done in advance. Because gas and electricity are not perceptible, people who use them never have any sense of how much they are using. But with wood, they are conscious of how much they consume and how much remains, and consequently are less likely to waste it. It makes them more cognizant of scarcity, and as a result, they form a deeper appreciation of living things, which they see as the goal of Buddhism.

There are two primary ways they select who acts as tenzo. The first, and ideal method, is to let older, experienced monks fill the role. They have more time and flexibility, and they can take on more responsibility. But because not many monks are at that stage, and since many quit before they get there, they have decided that it's valuable to have the younger people experience it. By doing the work of the tenzo, and working half the day just to harvest the vegetables and wash the rice, they come to have a greater appreciation for the meal, even if it is just a meager offering. On special occasions like *sesshin* (period of intensive meditation), however, they do rely on the more experienced monks to cook so the younger people can focus on zazen.

The meals are very similar to Heirinji. Lunch is the biggest, and *ichiju issai* is typical. Because of the limitations of cooking with wood and *kama*, rice and boiled vegetables are fairly standard. Dinner is less formal and generally consists of leftovers from lunch.

The monks at Engakuji consider sustainability issues, and many of their practices aim to minimize waste of food and other resources like wood and water. Even the cinders left over from cooking do not go to waste; they are used for other purposes later. As one monk at Engakuji explained, it is important not to waste food because when you cook and eat something, you are taking the life of a sentient being. So when cooking, one should consider each ingredient and not just use it, but educe its fullest nature, and "take it as it is." This viewpoint is implicit in *Tenzo Kyōkun*, where Dōgen writes "Handle even a single leaf of a green in such a way that it manifests the body of the Buddha. This in turn allows the Buddha to manifest through the leaf."[68]

Conclusion

It is clear that *Tenzo Kyōkun* continues to have a discernible influence on monastery foodways in Japanese Rinzai Zen temples. The role of tenzo is highly valued, and great consideration is put into deciding who fulfills it and how. As was the case with the monks at Engakuji, it was also seen as a vital exercise in spiritual practice, and an important one for young monks to experience early in their training. This had not been the case before Dōgen wrote *Tenzo Kyōkun*. When he returned from

[68] Uchiyama, 7-8

China, he stayed at Kennin-ji for two years, where, "They had the office of tenzo, but in name only; there was no one who actually carried out the functions of the office … It was a pathetic and sad state of affairs."[69]

Of course there have been some minor changes since the time when Dōgen wrote *Tenzo Kyōkun*, like some temples having two tenzos instead of one, and having a dinner meal. These differences are mainly the result of practical concerns. For example, because monks didn't used to do as much labor, they didn't require as much food during the day. And penury and famine are no longer major concerns in modern-day Japan, though still very little resources are wasted. Instead, temples are faced with issues like the waning popularity of Buddhism in the ever-changing culture. And they must be cognizant of their role in matters of environmental sustainability.

It is also evident that *Tenzo Kyōkun* could be considered what Kōshō Uchiyama calls "one of the most valuable religious texts of all time." At its essence, it shows both ordained and laypeople how a mundane task like cooking contains meaning, and how everyday lives can be filled with true religious practice. Unlike other rituals like meditation, it is something that everybody can relate to.

In the United States, there is an ever-increasing sense of awareness about what people eat, where food comes from, who produces it, and how it is produced. Whether arising from concerns of food security, environmental degradation, economic justice, personal health, or mere gastronomy, there is a preponderance of media that support and engender this scrutiny. As people look backward to traditions for guidance, this

[69] Uchiyama, 14-15

text, written over 700 years ago, “teaches the spirit of a life of Zen through its examination of the role of the tenzo as a way to express wholehearted and magnanimous life.”[70]

[70] Warner, 122

APPENDIX

The following is a chronological list of published English translations of *Tenzo Kyōkun:*

"Regulations" by Yūhō Yokoi. Tokyo, 1973.

"Instruction to the Chief Cook" by Roshi Jiyu Kennett. California, 1976.

"Instructions for the Zen Cook" by Thomas Wright, published in Tokyo and New York in 1983, which was based off of *Eiheigen Zenji Shingi*, compiled by Reiyō Endō and published in 1956.

"Instruction for the Tenzo" by Arnold Kotler and Kazuaki Tanahashi. San Francisco, 1985.

"Zen Master Dogen's Monastic Regulations" by Ichimura Shohei. Washington, 1993.

"Dogen's Pure Standards for the Zen Community" by Taigen Dan Leighton and Shohaku Okumura. New York, 1996.

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